

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Pronatura, Inc

#### Puerto Rico Manufacturing Extension Inc

#### Pronatura Ensures Safe Workplace Environment

##### Client Profile:

Pronatura is a paper recycling company located in Cataño, Puerto Rico. Founded in 1997, the company collects used paper from newspaper printers, private industries, and collection deposits, which is then segregated, shredded, compacted, and baled for resale overseas. The company has 30 employees.

##### Situation:

Pronatura's segregating and compacting activities increase the level of dust in the plant's air. The company was concerned that this amount of dust could create health problems for its employees and trigger possible Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) fines. The company's first option was to invest \$200,000 in an air exhaust system; however, the equipment supplier was not willing to guarantee the system's effectiveness. Pronatura consulted the environmental specialists at Puerto Rico Manufacturing Extension, Inc. (PRiMEX), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for problem solving assistance.

##### Solution:

PRiMEX took a tour of Pronatura's plant to perform an initial evaluation of the situation and to better understand the company's concerns. Based on this initial analysis, PRiMEX conducted industrial hygiene studies in three different work areas. PRiMEX sampled and analyzed the air in each area to measure employee exposure to dust, and compared these samples to OSHA's Permissible Exposure Levels (PEL).

The study concluded that employees in Pronatura's main operation area were working within OSHA's PELs. PRiMEX found no violations of employee safety regulations. However, in response to Pronatura's desire to reduce the level of dust even further, PRiMEX worked with the company to build a conveyor that connects various workstations and reduces the need to use heavy equipment that pushes dust into the air. PRiMEX also cross-trained Pronatura employees so they can rotate to various working areas, thereby minimizing prolonged exposure to exceptionally dusty work areas. Finally, PRiMEX conducted a 5S workplace organization event to clean all surfaces and establish a housekeeping/maintenance schedule that prevents dust from building up in the first place.

##### Results:

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Verified environmental safety.

Built equipment to replace machinery that contributes to environmental hazard.

Cross-trained employees to minimize exposure to environmental hazards and reduce fatigue.

Developed housekeeping/maintenance schedule to prevent build-up of environmental hazards.

Avoided \$200,000 capital equipment investment and potential fines ranging between \$7,000 to \$75,000.

Created a better work environment for employees.

### **Testimonial:**

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